

6 April 1981
MAU-1030

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report - Austrian Bureau - March 1981

I. GENERAL

The highest-ever demand for bureau videocassettes from Yugoslav, Czechoslovak and Hungarian television was recorded in March. A total of 43 videocassettes were pouched out, 40 of these to Headquarters (24 Yugoslav, 14 Czechoslovak and 2 Budapest) and 3 to BBC as part of regular service for a BBC consumer. April started strongly with another request for 4 more Yugoslav videocassettes, including one from Sarajevo. A bureau proposal to sharpen the focus on Yugoslav leader TV appearances chosen for video selection lists by adding the qualifier "significant" was accepted by Headquarters.

The continuing relatively strong showing of the U.S. dollar against the Austrian schilling and West German mark enabled Headquarters to reduce Vienna's FY-1981 bureau-controlled budget by \$133,000 or 8.5 percent, mostly because of savings in personal salary costs. The exchange rate hovered above AS 15.00 to \$1.00 the first 10 days of March, but then began a downward trend that continued most of the month, reaching a low of AS14.5 to \$1.00 on 20 March, and starting April with a rate in the range of AS14.85 to \$1.00.

Bureau employees received in March both their retroactive half cost-of-living increase backpay for all of 1980 as well as that also approved effective 25 January 1981, checks totaling over \$15,700 for the bureau-computed 1980 back pay. RAMC Paris was able to implement the second, half-COL increase retroactively to 25 January without the scarce State Department personnel action forms, after the bureau pouched the new schedule with a request for implementation and computation of back pay. Progress continued on rewriting all bureau nonstaff position descriptions to suit State Department format, with major duties descriptions for all monitor positions completed by month's end, when work began on portions dealing with "desired qualifications" and "position elements" portions. It is expected this work will be completed and handed over to Embassy Personnel Officer prior to the annual bureau chiefs' conference 27 April, with monitor descriptions being pouched in advance to Chief, Operations Group.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. Bureau Polish press monitoring production remained at a high level despite two weeks of annual leave in early March by First Pole [redacted]

carried the burden, with Soviet regional radio and Ukrainian press handed over to BBC and Headquarters, and London PMU assistance on a TRYBUNA LUDU article on 2 March. Vienna arranged for a PMU subscription to this paper, whose poor printing quality has consistently made facsimile transmission nearly impossible to process, to enable PMU to help out. A decision was made to TDY PMU's Polish press monitor to Vienna if alternate Polish paper sources could not be found. Near month's end London found a local source for Polish papers as well. Continued crisis interest in Poland led to putting

[redacted] back into fulltime Polish processing at month's end, with Kiev Radio cassettes airmailed to London to avoid tying up the VCVC channel while BBC's 24-hour watch on Warsaw Radio continued from 26 March.

2. Television coverage development included Prague TV recordings of the close of the Moscow CPSU 26th Party Congress 3 March, and the opening of the Slovak Party Congress on 16 March. Effective 26 March the bureau began protective coverage of Austrian television's two main evening newscasts, to catch newsbreaks on major events in which Austria is involved; programs are scanned for flash-worthy items by the evening monitor covering Prague/Bratislava TV. A recent example of an ORF-TV first was the cancellation of Chancellor Kreisky's Middle East tour because of a relapse in chronic eye trouble. A bureau query to FCS on television VSL flagging yielded a general correction in flagging to provide VSL's from Czechoslovak and Hungarian TV to Analysis Group, which previously had not been a recipient.

3. The attempted assassination of President Reagan on 30 March kept the bureau open 25 minutes late to clear a first Belgrade Radio report with comment. Subsequent East European comment produced the expected cliches about "terrorism" and "violence" in America, along with get well messages from certain leaders.

4. The change to summer/daylight saving time on 29 March by several target radios led to bureau staffing time changes: 0430-2030 GMT daily for technicians, 0630-2200 for radio Monitors and editors Monday-Friday (but press monitors

leave at 1500GMT), and 1100-2200 for monitors and 1330-2200 for editors/communicators on weekends & holidays.

B. Communications

The Mode V Autodin circuit via Pirmasens ASC experienced considerable difficulty in March, and a bureau-logged outage of 9:52, although Pirmasens itself did not log any official downtime or reasons therefor. Some 6,800 words were relayed via London Bureau and VCVC. On 5-6 March, following a scheduled outage at the Coltano, Italy, ASC, a minimize was imposed on European autodin traffic because Pirmasens and Croughton ASC's were heavily overloaded. Exchanges of messages with London and Headquarters Commcenter in March helped to clarify advisory procedures and the fact that Pirmasens does not always advise Vienna when it must use Phase II altrouting via Croughton and the VCVC. Despite outages, the bureau teletypists held their CIM error rate below 2 percent for a sixth successive month. Facsimile transmissions over the VCVC remained at a high level, 80 for March.

C. Lateral Services

The State Department psychiatrist assigned to Vienna as a base, Dr. Paul Eggertsen, who tours East Europe regularly and also was on the reception staff for the U.S. hostages from Teheran, requested suspension of his service with the BBC East Europe Monitoring Report. Another Austrian TV panel discussion program was recorded on 27 March for ICA Press Officer Charles Lahey.

D. Technical

The bureau was able to greatly improve backup reception of Warsaw I radio on 227 Khz for BBC by installation of one of the new Melpar E-systems notch filters in the output of a fixed-frequency Frederick 1500B receiver, eliminating a permanent heterodyne that had degraded the signal. The filter was found to be not needed by Yugoslav monitors. A rare, 5-minute power outage on

20 March, evidently related to cable replacement work in Vienna's 18th and 19th districts, caused minor problems despite the fact no advance warning was given by the city power company. This included a missed portion of Slovak CP First Secretary Lenart's report relayed to BBC, which was filled from the press.



Chief, FBIS Austrian Bureau

Attachments:

Publishable Wordage Report
Production Report
Staff Personnel Report
Non-Staff Personnel Report

cc: Chief, FBIS London Bureau

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